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Republic of South Africa Systematic Country Diagnostic

An Incomplete Transition: Overcoming the Legacy of Exclusion in South Africa

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Background note

Gender in South Africa

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Introduction

Despite strong representation in national politics and their higher levels of enrollment in secondary and higher education, South African women face numerous constraints that prevent them from fully contributing to poverty reduction and shared prosperity. Many of these constraints are underpinned by social norms that cause women to: have less time for productive activities; avoid STEM subjects in their formal education; enter lower paid jobs and sectors; accept the use of violence (including by their male spouses and partners); have less access to productive assets. These norms, while seen across many countries around the world, were not formed in a vacuum. Thus, it is important to recognize the role that specific factors in the history of South Africa have played in the development and entrenchment of certain social norms and practices. The legacy of exclusion emanating from colonialism and apartheid disrupted family structures, aiding transactional sex and the spread of HIV/AIDS, and leaving children vulnerable to abuse and without male role models. Similarly, apartheid was characterized by the creation of a large low skilled population, and the legacy of this can still be seen with poorer access to health, education, and economic opportunities among the Black and Colored population. Evidence suggests that the frustrations that young men feel as a result of not being able to meet commonly held expectations of manhood (such as providing for a family) may result in high rates of crime and gender-based violence (International Alert 2016).

Human development

Overall, there is still a significant proportion of children not enrolled in secondary school in South Africa, with the latest WDI data showing net enrollment of 72 percent in 2005. South Africa has relative gender parity in access to primary schooling but boys are less likely than girls to be enrolled in secondary school (62 percent versus 69 percent).

It is important to recognize the different reasons that boys and girls drop out of the education system, so that interventions are effectively designed to meet the distinct needs of girls and boys. Among youth ages 14-18 years, boys and girls are both mostly likely to report fees/money as the main reason for not being in education. However, boys are more likely than girls to cite 'education is useless' (13 percent versus 7.5), 'unable to perform' (12.2 percent versus 4.4), and 'working' (10.3 versus 4.7), while girls are more likely to cite 'family commitment' (16.5 versus 1.1) (GOSA, 2015). For boys, the alternative to remaining in an education system that they know will probably not lead them to good future opportunities, is to join a gang, where they can more certainly acquire 'respect' and money and, ultimately, fulfil traditional notions of what it means to be a successful man. This may be accentuated by the lack of male role models, with many households not having a father present (see section 3, below). For girls, 'family commitment' appears to reflect early childbearing: while the South African Schools Act allows pregnant girls to re-enroll in school once they give birth, among girls aged 15-19 who were not enrolled in school, most (28 percent) cite being pregnant or having a baby as the main reason. The adolescent fertility rate in South Africa (47 births per 1,000 women ages 15-19) is in line with the average for upper-middle income countries.

While women are more likely to enroll in tertiary education, with a ratio of female to male enrollment rates of almost 1.5, the picture is less positive if we disaggregate by level of qualification and subject areas. While women make up 61 percent of undergraduates, they constitute only 48 percent of Masters and 43 percent of doctoral students (GOSA, 2015). This is concerning, given the demand in South Africa for higher skilled workers – though it is true that employment growth has been fast for those with any level of degree

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(above high school martic) and that level of education is much more highly correlated with economic participation for women than for men, with a labor force participation ratio of graduates to primary educated of 2.2 for women compared to 1.7 for men (GOSA, 2015). Gender gaps in STEM are already evident in secondary school, with girls having lower pass rates than boys for STEM subjects, and this patterns carries through to the tertiary level: data from the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Report 2017 show a female to male ratio of 0.79 among science, math, and statistics graduates, and a ratio of 0.29 among engineering, manufacturing, and construction graduates. This places SA around the middle of a group of neighboring and GNI/capita peer countries (see table 1). that only 13 percent of female graduates are from STEM subjects, compared to 28 percent of male graduates. Other data shows that women make up only 29 percent of engineering, manufacturing, and construction graduates and 49 percent of science graduates, while they make up 79 percent of services graduates and 74 percent of both education and health and welfare graduates (GOSA, 2015).

Table 1: Ratio of female to male graduates in selected STEM subjects for SA and peer countries.

Country	Engin. Manuf. Constrc.	Science/Math/Stats
Namibia	0.11	0.63
Lesotho	0.28	0.92
South Africa	0.29	0.79
Mexico	0.35	1
Colombia	0.4	0.94
Swaziland	0.47	0.36
Indonesia	0.51	1.22

Quality of education is a concern in South Africa, with mixed evidence on gender gaps in learning outcomes. Literacy rates are high and there is only a very small gender gap in adult literacy rates (93.4 percent for women compared to 95.4 percent for men). Moreover, this small gap has now reversed among the youth population among which a slightly higher percentage of young women (99.2 percent) is literate compared to young men (98.7 percent). Other measures of learning outcomes are less positive. Overall, 27 percent of test takers in South Africa scored below the lowest performance benchmark in reading, compared to an average of 17 percent for other low and middle income countries in the assessment (SACMEQ, 2007). A higher percentage of boys than girls pass the National Senior Certificate Examinations in Accounting (44 percent vs 40 percent), Math (35 percent vs 27 percent), and Physical Science (47 percent vs 39 percent). However, data from SACMEQ III show that girls outperform boys in reading with an average score of 506 compared to 484 for boys (Spaull, 2011). Timæus et al (2013) also find that boys’ attainment in school is worse than girls’, that they are less likely than girls to be enrolled in school at the appropriate age, and that girls are more likely than boys to pass their high school matriculation exam. The fact that boys are less likely to be enrolled at the right age suggests that parents may play a role in undermining boys’ education. Overall, however, there appears to be a lack of research on the underlying causes of boys’ lower educational access and the growing gender gap.

The current health care system was adapted from the system under apartheid which provided inferior care for Blacks and Coloreds, with Whites mostly accessing higher quality and subsidized private care and Blacks and Coloreds mostly accessing poor quality public care. Despite the end of apartheid, continuing inequalities in access and quality of care can be seen between the different races and the majority of human resources are still servicing the private sector that is unaffordable to most Blacks and Coloreds. Kon and Lackan (2008) find that 41 percent of Blacks report going without medical care during the year, compared to only 11 percent of Whites and 7 percent of Asians. In terms of the geographic location of physical infrastructure, it is not only health care facilities that are inadequate in areas where most Blacks reside, but

other infrastructure that is essential to the maintenance of public health. For example, Kon and Lackan (2008) find that 22 percent of the primary sampling units in which Blacks resided had no piped water system. However, when it comes to maternal health care, data from the 2016 DHS indicates that there is a high level of access to care across all regions, education levels, and poverty quintiles (Stats SA, 2017). For example, skilled birth assistance ranges from 94 percent for those with incomplete primary education to 96 percent for those with more than secondary education; and skilled birth assistance is actually slightly higher for those in the poorest wealth quintile (94 percent) than those in the highest wealth quintile (92 percent).

Health: Gender-based violence (GBV) is widespread in South Africa and inflicts significant economic as well as human costs. While national estimates of GBV do not exist, regional estimates are available and we have national estimates for intimate partner violence (IPV), the most common type of GBV in South Africa. A four-province Gender Links' (2012) study found lifetime experience of GBV at 77 percent of women in Limpopo, 51 percent in Gauteng, 45 percent in Western Cape, and 36 percent in Kwa-Zulu Natal. The 2016 DHS includes data on IPV and shows that over 20 percent of women have experienced physical violence by a partner during their lives, with higher rates in Eastern Cape (32 percent), North West (29 percent), and Mpumalanga (26 percent). There are also large variations by education and wealth: 21 percent of those with no education have experienced physical violence by a partner during their lives compared to 12 percent of those with more than secondary education; 26 percent of those from the poorest quintile, versus 13 percent of those from the richest quintile (Stats SA, 2017).

A recent report from KPMG (2017) estimates that GBV costs South Africa to be as high as 42 billion rand per year (1.3 percent of GDP), though this may be an underestimate, as there is not sufficient data on some costs that could have been included in the calculations. The costs associated with GBV include those related to health care, justice, lost earnings, productivity, and taxes. For example, in South Africa, a woman's lifetime experience of violence is associated with 35 percent lower earnings.

Gender norms and unequal power relations between women and men underlie the high rates of GBV seen in South Africa. One study (UCT, 2016) identifies the following factors associated with the victimization of women: the economic dependency of a woman on a male partner, the extent of the control of the relationship by the man, and the man's personal norms related to inequitable gender relationships (UCT, 2016). These can all be viewed as issues that have unequal gender relations and the social norms that drive them at their root. These factors are also at the heart of the spread of HIV, as illustrated by the phenomenon of 'blessers' - men who trade sexual favors for gifts or money. This is backed up by the findings of a study in Eastern Cape province, which finds that relationship power inequity (measured by a sexual relationship power scale) increases women's risk of HIV infection (Jewkes et al, 2010). This reflects the findings of other studies from around the Sub-Saharan region that identify a link between women's economic empowerment and their vulnerability to sexually transmitted diseases and IPV. For example, in Tanzania, De Walque et al (2014) find that, over a four-month period, women who experienced a negative shock to their households' food security were 36 percent more likely to test positive for an STI, and that women who experienced negative food shocks were 12 percent more likely to self-report having had unprotected sex.

Evidence on the effectiveness of different interventions indicates that empowering women can have large impacts not only on their economic empowerment, but also on gender norms, including the acceptance of GBV. Yet evidence also shows that it is essential to engage men in these efforts. In Limpopo province, a combined microfinance and HIV/gender roles training program for women resulted in a 55 percent reduction in experience of intimate partner violence (Pronyk et al, 2006). However, interventions that empower women without engaging men may cause men to feel that their social status is being threatened and so may actually lead to an increase in IPV. For example, in Ethiopia, a project that supported women's employment in the flower industry found that receiving a job offer was associated with a greater risk of IPV (Hjort and Villanger, 2011). On the other hand, an impact evaluation in Burundi found that adding a discussion series for men and women to a Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) Program brought

improvements in attitudes to violence against women, women's participation in household decision making, and couples' negotiation skills – the study also found a small reduction in occurrence of domestic violence (Iyengar and Ferrari, 2011).

One critical element of engaging men is challenging the widely-held notions of masculinity that underpin GBV. Research in South Africa has highlighted the commonly-held belief that rape strengthens a perpetrator's masculinity and that violence in general is an acceptable way of defending male dignity (UCT, 2016). Traditional notions of what it means to be a man can also be problematic when men are unable to live up to meet these expectations of manhood, due to a lack of opportunities or education/skills - this may cause psychological distress and push men toward destructive coping behaviors, such as substance abuse and domestic violence (International Alert 2016). On the other hand, traditional notions of masculinity also make men and boys more vulnerable as victims of abuse: while studies have found similar rates of sexual abuse for boys and girls, the UBS Optimus Foundation (2016) study found that when the perpetrator is known to the victim, boys are much less likely to report incidents to the authorities (0 percent of boys versus 31 percent of girls). Traditional conceptions of masculinity are also thought to be associated with risky sexual behavior and the spread of HIV. For example, research in Malawi, South Africa, Uganda, and Zimbabwe finds that ideas around masculinity increase men's risk of infection and decrease the likelihood of getting tested for HIV (Skovdal et al, 2011). Other research indicates that across Africa fewer men take up antiretroviral therapy (ART), while those who do start the treatment later and are more likely to interrupt treatment (Cornell et al, 2011). In South Africa, one study noted that men do not want to get tested because they are seen as the head of the household and social norms pressure them to deny any personal weaknesses (Urdang, 2006).

In addition to gender norms and women's empowerment, there is also evidence that experience of abuse during childhood is associated with greater risks of being both a perpetrator and a victim during adulthood: a woman who experienced violence in childhood is over 3 times more likely to have experienced violence in last 12 months, while a woman who witnessed violence in childhood is almost twice as likely to experience violence over her lifetime. In this light, it is important to consider the very high rates of child physical and sexual abuse in South Africa. One study from the UBS Optimus Foundation (2016) finds that more than a third of young people (15-17 years old) have suffered some kind of sexual abuse during their lives, with similar rates for boys and girls (37 percent and 34 percent). On the other hand, a University of Cape Town (UCT, 2016) study finds higher rates of sexual abuse against girls than boys, but finds that boys are more likely to experience physical abuse. One specific practice that impacts girls is that of "ukuhlolwa", or virginity testing, which involves a physical examination of girls by older women in the community to establish whether their hymens are intact (UCT, 2016). Factors linked to higher risk of child sexual abuse include: prolonged parental absences and living with neither or only one biological parent; substance abuse by parents; disability of the child; and the number of teens or adults a child shared their bedroom with (UBSOF, 2016). Poverty, labor migration patterns, and cultural practices have all contributed to high rates of parental (especially father) absence from the household in South Africa (Hall et al, 2014). In one study, Willey et al (2009) find that less than 40 percent of young children (aged below 5 years) live with their fathers, even though over 90 percent of young children had both parents still alive. This situation not only puts children at greater risk of abuse, but also means that a large portion of boys grow up without a male role model at home.

Economic empowerment

With women being more concentrated in lower paid jobs and having less secure access to a variety of assets it is not surprising that women experience slightly higher rates of poverty and a larger poverty gap, especially if they are head of their household. Data for 2015 (Stats SA, 2017b) show that 27 percent of women (compared to 24 percent of men) live below the food poverty line, 57 percent (versus 54 percent) live below the Upper Bound Poverty Line, and that women have a poverty gap of 29 percent (versus 27

percent for men). However, the gender gaps are much larger when we look at female-headed households versus male-headed households, with poverty incidence of 50 percent versus 33 percent, and a poverty gap of 23 percent versus 14 percent for male-headed households.

Labor force participation

Women are less likely to men to participate in the labor force and, when they do they tend to earn lower wages. A range of constraints explain this situation, including women's concentration in lower-paid jobs and sectors, women's unequal share of domestic tasks (such as child care and family care related to HIV/AIDS), and gender discrimination by employers (ILO et al, 2016).

There is a large gender gap in labor force participation in South Africa, with a female to male labor force participation ratio of just 76 percent. This is lower than in neighboring Botswana (82 percent) and Namibia (91 percent). Not only is the gender gap large, but women's absolute level of participation is low – just 47 percent of women are economically active, compared to 63 percent in both Botswana and Namibia. South Africa also has a large gender wage gap (based on median hourly wages) of just over 40 percent (ILO et al, 2016).

One key constraint to women's participation in the labor force is their unequal responsibility for childcare and the insufficient supply of childcare services. The introduction of Child Support Grants and the standardization of the Old Age Pension in the 1990s have increased women's participation in employment. By 2013, child support grants, first introduced in 1998, supplemented the wages of the primary caregivers of 11.4 million children (ILO, 2016). Evidence suggests that the Child Support Grant increases women's labor market participation by 7 to 14 percent, with larger impacts for the least educated women. The Old Age Pension also helps, by financing childcare and job search for young women in households with a pension recipient (Fultz and Francis, 2013). However, it is clear that childcare is still a constraint to women's labor force participation. When asked for reasons for not wanting to work, 56 percent of women gave "homemaking" as the reason (the most common response), compared to only 23 percent of men. It is easy to see why this is the case, when we consider that, in South Africa, women spend almost three times more time on unpaid work than men, and that if we combine data for paid and unpaid work, men carry only 74 percent of the total workload of women (GOSA, 2015; Budlender, 2008). When we look at childcare, the gender gap is even larger, with women spending thirteen times more time on childcare compared to men (Charmes, 2006). Evidence from around the world clearly shows there are large economic losses associated with a lack of childcare services. In Brazil, an evaluation of a childcare lottery found an increase in employment from 36 percent to 46 percent for mothers who 'won' childcare provision (Barros et al, 2011). There is also evidence on the impact of childcare on incomes for those who are in informal employment: in India, an evaluation of an intervention to provide self-employed women with childcare found that women who benefitted from the program increased their incomes by 50 percent (Alfers, 2015).

Despite small or reverse gender gaps in education, women in South Africa are more concentrated in low skilled, low-paying, and more vulnerable forms of employment than men. For example, 36 percent of women work in low skilled jobs, compared to 25 percent of men. Women also tend to have less preferential contracts, with higher rates of temporary or seasonal employment (ILO et al, 2016). These differences translate into a large gender pay gap, with women taking home a median monthly income of 2,500 rand, compared to 3,600 for men. Women also tend to work in lower paying sectors and jobs, which may partly reflect the gender segregation we see in the subjects studied during formal education. Women tend to gravitate toward service jobs and nursing: around 84 percent of women's employment is in the service sector, compared to 60 percent of men's employment (GOSA, 2017). Within the services sector, two sub-sectors account for the majority of women's employment, with 31 percent of women working in community, social, and personal services, and 22 percent of women in wholesale and retail. Moreover, women's employment is more narrowly concentrated in individual industries, with the top 4 industries

accounting for 81 percent of women's employment, compared to 62 percent for men. This places women in a more vulnerable position in relation to potential downturns in specific sectors of the economy.

One specific type of work that a large number of women are engaged in is domestic work. Estimates suggest over 14 percent of women are employed as domestic workers, with a total of over a million domestic workers in South Africa (ILO, 2016). Since the end of apartheid, various pieces of legislation have been used to bring domestic work increasingly into the formal sector, with increased protections for the mostly female workforce. In 1993, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) was extended to cover domestic workers, changing their status from "servant" to "worker", and bringing protections such as maximum working hours, overtime limits, and more days of paid family responsibility leave in recognition of that fact that domestic workers often have to live far away from their families. In 1994, the Labor Relations Act was extended to cover domestic worker, providing them with organizational rights. In the early 2000s, South Africa introduced a minimum wage for domestic workers and extension of the Unemployment Insurance Fund to these workers (ILO, 2016). Despite progress in protections for these workers, women in the domestic sector remain vulnerable: their work is carried out in private residences and so it is more difficult to regulate working conditions. Moreover, almost half of all domestic workers in South Africa are internal or cross-border migrants (Dinat and Peberdy, 2007), leaving them with no established local support network. For example, inspectors from the Department of Labour can only enter private residences where domestic workers are employed if they have permission from the employer (ILO, 2016). In a study of risk factors for domestic violence, Jewkes et al (2002) find that while domestic workers make up 11 percent of all the women in their study, they comprise over 14 percent of those who experienced domestic violence over the past year.

It is important to look also at unemployment and underemployment among men, especially young men. This is one of the causes of high levels of violence and crime in South Africa (World Bank, 2011). The link between economic empowerment and men's engagement in illicit activity has been demonstrated in numerous studies across the region. For example, research in Liberia demonstrates that interventions that combine cash grants, psychological counseling, and training can steer young men away from illicit and violent activities – though this was in the context of a post-conflict state, with a focus on ex-combatants (Blattman et al, 2015; Blattman and Annan, 2015). The male youth unemployment rate in South Africa is extremely high at 46.3 percent, though female youth unemployment is higher at 54.9 percent.

Access to assets

The Recognition of Customary Marriages Act of 1998 provides for equal legal rights for women and men regarding ownership of property (including land). However, customary practices mean that, in practice, there are significant gender gaps in asset ownership.

One study in KwaDube (ICRW, 2011) indicates that 85 percent of men own land either jointly or alone, compared to only 20 percent of women. Across the country, between 2005 and 2010, only 36 percent of the beneficiaries of the land redistribution and tenure program were women. The study in KwaDube also finds a gender gap in home ownership (86 percent of men versus 33 percent of women). Customary beliefs and practices underpin women's lower access to land and other property. For example, in KwaZulu Natal, Rugege et al (2007) find widespread belief that women should only obtain rights to land through their husbands and that women's rights to independently own land would cause the breakdown of family structures and overexploitation of land. In some communities, women are also considered legal minors – thus, they are not only disadvantaged in terms of ownership of assets, but also in their ability to independently engage in contracts. The continuation of discriminatory customary practices is promoted by the central role of local power relations in determining land rights and women's lower levels of participation in local and traditional land administration structures.

Women's lower ownership over land and property is important as these are critical sources of collateral for loans. Data from the Global Findex database reveals that the issues is not only women's access to finance, but also how they invest the finance they do access: men are almost twice as likely to have borrowed to operate or expand a farm or business (9.3 percent versus 5.9 percent), while women are more likely to borrow to finance food consumption (51 percent of women compared to 42 percent of all people) or to pay for school fees. Finally, when women try to access finance to invest in their businesses, there is anecdotal evidence that key decision makers, such as bank managers, tend to view women's competing traditional roles as a risk when making decisions credit.

The South African government has implemented various initiatives aimed at empowering women entrepreneurs and women's access to assets more generally (such as the Department of Trade and Industries' Isivande Women's Fund, Support Programme for Innovation, and Small Enterprise Development Agency Technology Programme). Overall financial inclusion has increased in South Africa in recent years, with 75 percent of the population banked in 2014 compared to 46 percent in 2004 (GOSA, 2015).

As well as being more likely to own land, men are also more likely to own other types of assets that can help them respond to negative shocks. A study by the ICRW (2011) finds that, in KwaDube and Inanda, men own two to three more types of material non-land assets than women, with men more likely than women to own transportation assets (13 percent versus 3 percent), agricultural assets (57 percent versus 42 percent), and durable household goods (83 percent versus 56 percent). Using multivariate regression analysis, the study finds that earning cash income and being divorced, widowed or separated are factors that strengthen women's rights over assets. This suggests that policies to increase women's control over assets could include those that promote women's labor force participation (e.g. provision of childcare) and communication/sensitization campaigns (targeting both women and men) to improve knowledge of women's rights to assets under statutory law and the benefits of equal rights, so that married women are not dependent on their male partners for their rights over assets. Unsurprisingly, given their lower ownership rates, women report having less decision-making power over land and housing. However, gender gaps in ownership and decision-making power disappear (except for ownership of transport) for female household heads. This is surprising given the research from other countries that shows female-headed households tend to have less access to assets than women in male-headed households and given the higher rates of poverty the data show for female-headed households in South Africa.

Data and knowledge gaps

Some key data and knowledge gaps, include the following:

- National GBV estimates (though DHS provides estimates for IPV, which is likely the largest component of GBV)
- Analysis of the underlying reasons for boys' lower educational enrollment and the growing gender gap
- A national level estimate of differential access to assets (both for women versus man and female-headed households versus male-headed households). Existing regional research indicates that FHH have better access to assets than women in male-headed households and relative parity with male-headed households. This raises the question of why female-headed households appear to be much poorer than male-headed households, with larger poverty gender gaps than between male and female individuals.

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